

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1269
By: Wentworth
Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Recently, the Texas Ethics Commission adopted Ethics Advisory Opinion No. 484. This opinion stated that expenditures accepted under certain provisions which allow an officeholder to accept transportation, lodging, and meals if the officeholder provides services that are more than merely perfunctory, could be considered a political contribution under certain circumstances. The Ethics Advisory Opinion was recently withdrawn by the Ethics Commission, leaving the current state of the law unclear.

S.B. 1269 clarifies the law such that transportation, lodging, and meals accepted under the statute are not political contributions. It also codifies a longstanding Ethics Commission interpretation that the prohibitions on receiving or providing benefits described in law, do not apply to such benefits.

S.B. 1269 amends current law relating to transportation, lodging, and meals offered to and accepted by public servants.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 36.07, Penal Code, by adding Subsection (b-1) to provide that transportation, lodging, and meals described by Subsection (b) (relating to a public servant accepting transportation and lodging expenses) are not political contributions as defined by Title 15 (Regulating Political Funds and Campaigns), Election Code.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 36.10(a), Penal Code, to provide that Sections 36.08 (Gift to Public Servant by Person Subject to His Jurisdiction) and 36.09 (Offering Gift to Public Servant) do not apply to certain items, including transportation, lodging, and meals described by Section 36.07(b).

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2011.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2011.